TRACER

McHENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AN ILLINOIS CORPORATION (not for profit)

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VOLUME V - No. 2 Newsletter AUTUMN, 1978

We have a brand new feature for the Tracer this quarter. We hope it will be a continuing part of the newsletter. It is a letter from the new curator, Mark Haggitt, who has been busily getting acquainted with his job and the board of directors.

CURATOR'S LETTER

Dear Members:

I would like to take this opportunity to extend personal thanks to all of you who have given Donna and me such a warm welcome to your county. We both feel that we have made many new friends that will not be forgotten and look forward to meeting and working with more of you as time permits.

The Board of Directors has been quite busy lately attending meetings and planning for the future development of the Museum. The regular Board meetings have been held on the fourth Monday of each month, as scheduled; add to these the special meetings held to discuss the furnace and the meetings of the newly established Planning Committee, and you have a very busy group of Directors.

A decision on the furnace has finally been reached - the old gas furnace will be replaced by all new electric heat which will hopefully defray the maintenance costs which have been mounting annually.

One of the main topics of conversation at recent Board meetings has been the Gannon house which is now at the Woodstock fairgrounds. The cabin will soon have a new home in front of the Museum building in Union and will be a welcome addition to our collections here at the Museum. The plans at this point call for developing an exhibit around a central theme in which a wide variety of artifacts could be used to portray Pioneer life in McHenry County.

Mr. Shuji Kimura will present a talk in Crystal Lake in January on the early architecture of Crystal Lake. This will be the first of a series of meetings to be held throughout the county, which will focus on the communities in which they are held. If any of you have program suggestions or would like to present a program we would be anxious to hear from you.

Another thought being hashed over is the possibility of keeping the Museum open on a full time basis for the Summer months. This would offer us an opportunity for increasing revenue as well as allowing a larger number of people the chance to learn something of the history of the county.

In order for these and other new programs to be successful and for the museum to grow and develop, we need (now more than ever) the support of the membership. The Historical Society has done a tremendous job up to this point and will continue to do so, I'm sure. When you're called on to help, please do!

Sincerely,
Mark Haggitt

NEW MEMBERS

Something else new to report are the recently joined members for September and October. They are: Mary Stewart Tittle of Woodstock; Gladys Bradley, Marengo; LaRita Lovett, Greenwood; Mrs. John Chott, Crystal Lake; Mr. & Mrs. Henry Gorham, Woodstock; Mrs. Ralph Obenauf, Hebron; Mrs. William Gardner, Spring Grove; John McDonald, Richmond; John Richards, Woodstock; Michael Zolno, Chicago; Ann Wells, California; Mr. & Mrs. Jack Biesterfeld, Crystal Lake; Greenwood School, Greenwood; Peter and Grace Bigalke, Marengo; Mrs. C.L. Dooley, Harvard; Dr. & Mrs. Walter Reeves, Crystal Lake; Clarence Lockwood, Marengo.

There are two comments brought up by this list of new members. A note was enclosed with Mr. Lockwood's membership, pointing out that he is a fourth generation member of a pioneer family. He continues to occupy and operate the family farm in Coral Township where his family has lived and worked since 1845. Marcia Lockwood, who sent the note, asks how many in the county can top that. It would be very interesting to hear from any family that can, or that can equal it. We promise to give their stories space in future Tracers.

The second comment is about Mr. Zolno, the young man from Chicago who took a membership in our society because he is working on a history of the postal system in our part of the country. When he visited our museum, he contacted the curator, and studied all the material we had that was of interest to his research. He would like to ask all members for permission to examine anything in the postal line from 1846 up to the present. Items might be letters with their covers and stamps, post cards, money orders or stubs. anything that was mailed in earlier years. Should you want to donate them to the McHenry county museum, they would be very welcome, but if you wish to retain them, he would just like to see them. Also, he will be glad to arrange an exhibit of this material, both belonging to the historical society and such as would be loaned to Mr. Zolno, in the spring, when the museum re-opens. If you have anything you are willing to let him see, you can get in touch with him through our curator at the museum.

OTHER VISITORS

Several school groups have visited the museum this fall. Perhaps the most interested class was that of Mrs. Laura Lewis from South School, Crystal Lake. Mrs. Lewis had attended the Union School when she was a girl so she had told her students about the building. When the children got to the Costume Room, they seemed to be peering through the quilts rather than admiring them. They were looking for the entrance to the fire escape tunnel which their teacher had told them was in that room. Unfortunately they were disappointed for it is no longer there.

The museum received a nice folder of letters from the class expressing their appreciation and telling what artifacts interested them most, we think you would like to share a few of these letters. Since all the docents that day were former teachers, we are sure they enjoyed both the children and their letters. We think you will too.

LETTERS FROM YOUNG VISITORS

"Dear Ms. Alice & Leta Clark, Alice & Francis Bailey,

Thank you very much for letting us come to your museum, and the tour you gave us.

The thing I liked best was the fire engine because that was the first time I hade saw a used up fire engine. And I like the doll cradle and the beds.

There are a lot of things there and it hard to say all the things that I liked. But thank you.

Tracey Leahey"

"Dear Ms. Alice & Leta Clark, Alice & Francis Bailey.

I have to thank you very much for taking me through a wonderful museum. And I hope that my Mom will bring me there soon.

I liked everything there but the one thing that I liked most was the pink couch in the music room, because it was silk and pretty.

And I also liked the American flag from the Civil War because it is kind of wierd seeing something from the live civil war.

And I thank you again for showing me the museum

Yours truley, Jenny Talley."

"Dear Ms. Alice & Leta Clark Alice & Francis Baily,

I enjoyed seeing the museum and the Civil War Flag and then I liked the side saddle and the doll stuff in the cubberd. And I liked weeving weed and Mrs. Lewis's classroom. And I like the Crystle lake bell and the war room. And I liked the jail. There was so many things to see. And the best thing was the doll strollers. I'd say that was the best museum I ever went to.

Sincerely, Kathy."

MORE VISITORS

Other groups visiting the Museum this fall: On October tenth, The New Frontiers, senior citizen group from the United Methodist Churches of Greenwood and Ringwood, accompanied by their pastor, Rev. James Segin. On October fifteenth, The Children of the American Revolution, accompanied by their leader Mrs. Rosemary Belmonte and guided by Olive Nolan. The next day saw fifty-six Fourth grade pupils from Cantebury School in Crystal Lake. A small group of volunteers from the McHenry County Conservation District with Chuck Hudson, Naturalist, visited on October twenty-fifth. November second found St. Paul's Ladies' Aid from Harvard at the Museum and on the seventeenth a fourth and fifth grade group came from Canterbury School at Crystal Lake. Still to be scheduled are all the second grade classes from Greenwood school.

We are very happy to welcome the Greenwood School as members of the Society. Alice Clark

BENEFITS OF BELONGING TO SOCIETY

All summer people were making the most of their memberships when they came to enjoy the many Sunday programs that were sponsored by the directors. While nonmembers had to pay for their tours and entertainment, members were entitled to enter free. Also they had the satisfaction of knowing this was an advantage of their county and community that they had helped bring about. Reading the children's letters, or looking at the comments in the guest register gives you an idea of what the society is building in this museum. More of the history of the county is being resurrected and preserved all the time, and the credit for this goes to the members of the society. So, if your dues are not yet paid, get them in. We want you to remain a member and be a part of the good times and the good feelings, too.

PROGRAMS

It was a pleasure to all the members of the board of directors to hear the comments made on the varied programs that were offered throughout the summer. We are extremely sorry for the few occasions when something happened to delay or cancel a program. We hope to continue with them next year, of course, for they brought in extra money to the museum, and they increased, through publicity for the events and word of mouth advertising by those who came to enjoy them, the knowledge of the society and the Museum throughout the county, and beyond its borders.

One of the nicest accounts that we have seen of any one Sunday program was that of the GREENWOOD PROGRAM.

Greenwood Day at the County Museum was just a showing of the community spirit that has always prevailed in this historically rich little village. Greenwood township with its fertile land and lively Nippersink Creek attracted some of the first pioneers of McHenry county. Miss Ann McQuinn, for whom "Queen Ann Prairie" is named was the first white woman to keep house in the township, and she is buried in Greenwood cemetery where you will find a monument in tribute to "Queen Ann". It reads: Honoring this location is the interment of Miss Ann McQueen whose name lives in the title "Queen Ann Pairie". Her legendary arrival on Greenwood soil in 1833 indicates she was the first white girl to have inhabited McHenry County".

The first store and grist mill in the township were at the settlement called Troy, if you saw the fine drawings of D.K. Adams you will know that Troy was located on the Nippersink, approximately one and a half miles east of Greenwood near the Adams home.

1841 saw what was the beginning of a flourishing town at Greenwood with two stores, two churches, a wagon shop, three blacksmiths, a hardware store, a tin shop, a grist mill, a flour mill, the creamery, and the Post Office plus both grade and high school classes being held in the old brick school building.

In its one hundred thirty eight years of existence, Greenwood has never had a tavern or "saloon". Legend has it that a house still in existence was built for that purpose but when the owner met with opposition, his daughter opened a millinery shop instead.

Greenwood contended for the county seat in 1843 when it was moved from McHenry but failing in this and having the railroads by-pass it the village slowly began to decline. However, the spirit of the people of the Greenwood area has never declined. On September twenty-fourth, we witnessed the lending of precious items to be displayed, people giving of their time and talents, the help and participation of the church and the young people of the community, the excellent history so painstakingly compiled by Jessie Barber, all these things were a joy to see.

We were also the recipients of some articles relative to the area's early days: a 1910 picture of Dr. Hart with a group of former students on his ninety-eighth birthday was given by Mary Little of the Greenwood store; John McDonald of Richmond donated two hand wrought pokers that had been used by Mr. Peatt and Mr. Carr to stir the coal fires of their engine as they traveled from farm to farm, providing steam for the threshers. We appreciate these gifts.

"Greenwood village, though unpretentious at present, is situated most beautifully, and the natives claim theirs to be the handsomest town site in the county." This paragraph was taken from an article that appeared in the Woodstock Sentinel in 1859. (Yes, 1859.)

Clara Vogel

ANSWER TO LAST QUARTER'S "WHAT'S IT?"

In fact we have two answers, each of which looks entirely reasonable. We will let the lady go first. Gladys Bradley of Marengo thinks it was a carpet stretcher. Back in those times when people made many of their own carpets out of rags, the widths were sewn to-gether and tacked down to cover the whole floor. If it was not stretched really tight it would gradually work into wrinkles on which one could trip and be caused to take a tumble. So she thinks this was one of the carpet stretchers. The rake like teeth were stuck down into the carpet and the handle lifted to pull the carpet tight.

George Rich of Alden township says it looks to him to be a home made tool for removing burrs from wool fleece. The knife with it would have been used for cutting them free from the fleece.

PICTURE IDENTIFIED

Mrs. Charles Frey of Richmond, mother of one of the Historical Society's members, Mrs. Dalke of Lombard, took the time to write to us about one of the pictures in the last Tracer. I quote from her kind letter. "In your newsletter, Volume V, No. 1, you have a picture of two ladies sitting side by side. They have on white blouses and big black hats. The picture appears to be framed. The one on the left is Alice Redding and on the right is Nellie Haldeman who later married Reuben Turner. They were residents of Solon Mills.

My daughter who is a member of your society sent the paper to me to see if I could identify any of the pictures. Hope this is of help to you."

Indeed it is, and we send a sincere thank you to Mrs. Frey for her trouble.

OUR ADVERTISERS

In the planning stages for this Tracer, we asked the two of our advertisers who had not yet had a story about their businesses in our newsletter to send us information we could so use. A response came promptly from Mr. Thomas F. Bolger, president of the McHenry State Bank. We quote it verbatim: "McHenry State Bank was established in 1906 as the West McHenry State Bank and was located on Main Street in the West side business district. The original capitalization of the bank was $25,000.00 which has grown to $5,500,000.00 without the benefit of additonal stock subscriptions.

The bank name was changed to the McHenry State Bank in 1945 and in 1956 the bank moved to its present location at the intersection of Green and Elm Street in the heart of McHenry. At the time the new building was occupied, total resources were $11,000,000.00.

McHenry State Bank has grown to be the largest bank in McHenry County with total assets in excess of $110,000,000.00. The steady growth has resulted in an addition in 1966 doubling the size of the bank. McHenry State Bank is presently building a new drive-in and operations center. Plans also call for a new facility located on Crystal Lake Road in the vicinity of the West Campus of McHenry High School.

Much of the success of McHenry State Bank is attributed to the leadership of Gerald J. Carey who was chief executive officer for more than forty-five years, prior to his death in 1972.

Thomas F. Bolger is the current President of the McHenry State Bank. Other Directors are: Esther M. Carey; William A. Nye, M.D.; Robert L. Weber; Elmer P. Adams; John L. Cowlin; William J. Cowlin; Lenora E. Frisby; Ormel J. Prust and Francis M. Schmitt."

Our thanks to Mr. Bolger, His help is much appreciated.

Our letter to the Marengo Federal Savings and Loan received no reply. We do not know whether our epistle went astray, or their answer. However, such a fine organization must not be ignored, and we will give you a brief sketch from the McHenry County History of 1968. This tells us that they started as a building and loan institution in March, 1925, these men meeting in the office of the Ellison Machine Company on the second day of that month; Dan Boyle, who would be president; A.C. Smith, vice-president; Raymond Dusenberry, secretary; C. J. Coarson, treasurer; A.D. Ellison, N.V. Woleben, and G. H. Perkins, directors. Fred Kelley was elected secretary for the first time on July thirtieth, 1934. The federal charter was granted in March, 1936. In 1968, A. Joy Kelley had been a director for forty-two years. Others who had served in that capacity were: V.W. Bates; A.A. Crissey; Edwin Dean; A.D. Ellison; R.T. Fry; P.H. Gault; C.M. Havens; Harold Hyde; George McGill; H.C. Patrick; G.H. Perkins; Carlton Robb; E.C. Robb; and A.C. Smith.

The firm's business was first transacted from the office of F.R. Kelley until in May, 1953 they moved to a remodeled building at 102 North State Street. In August 1967 they moved into the handsome building they now occupy on East Grant Street.

Theirs has been a constantly growing organization and one we have been proud to count among our original advertisers.

NOTES ABOUT PEOPLE WE ALL KNOW

Many of our readers will know the Roach family only from their advertising, and they were the very first advertiser the Tracer had. In our story about them we told you while Dale and his wife have not been the owners and operators all that time, their hardware store had been in the same location for well over a century. Now to the amazement of all their customers and friends they are going to move! The hardware business is one that has expanded greatly in the last decade or so, and they just MUST have more room. We understand they are moving to the Burkart building - only two blocks further south on Ayer Street in Harvard, but an unbelievable distance for the imagination of those who have been climbing those two steps to their front door for lo, these many years.

At the October Board of Directors' meeting, it was voted to make Chester Nelson a director emeritus for life. This gentleman has been an enthusiastic, hard working member of the board, acting as treasurer and keeping us within the confines of our earlier, even more scanty budget

until such time as his eyesight compelled him to resign from that office. The board does not wish to deprive itself of that valuable advice he proffers when able to attend meetings and so have taken this step to insure his place.

Our President Emeritus, Dorothy McEachren, is on an extended vacation she could not take while acting as president, curator, head docent, secretary for the many letters that came to her and the society at the museum, and all the other jobs she did so capably. Rumor has it she has gone to Australia. She certainly deserves to have a vacation but we miss her.

A THANK YOU

We have not had a list of new acquisitions for publication just recently. Sometimes this means there have been a great many items, sometimes that there have been very few. But we must tell you that the Museum has been presented with a new American flag by the Union Post of the American Legion, to replace the somewhat worn one that has been decorating (?) our flag pole. It has been most gratefully received.

OBITUARIES

The first of the obituaries we mention to-day is that of a lady well-known to most of the society's directors. She was an early member of the society and interested in its work. Her name was Marion Conley and she had taught forty-five years in the Huntley Grade School. Her friends spoke of her courage and constancy, and they will miss her for a long time.

Another death we note in our newsletter is that - Carrie Bartelt Menzel. Born in 1882 at Bloomingdale, she was brought to Union at the age of seven and had attended the Union School and also Zion Lutheran School at Marengo. A lifelong member of the Lutheran church, in which she was confirmed in 1896, she was the oldest surviving member of the church.

Many of the photographs that have been published in The Tracer from time to time have born the imprint of Ruffie studios. The man who took those pictures was a photographer in Elgin and in Harvard for a great many years. Notice of Anthony Ruffie's death in Matteson at the age of ninety-five was received in Harvard in September. Another Harvard resident of the same age, Floyd Dennis, whose family are still Harvard residents, died in October, He worked at Starline from the early days of that company's existence, and was well known as a hunter and sportsman in his home area.

The names of numerous octogenarians who died in this quarter have been given to us to list: Mrs. Gladys A. Perkins, a former Woodstock school teacher; Mrs. Clara Laura Marsh, of Huntley; Mrs. Clara Norris, of Marengo; Mrs. Maude Belle Barton, of Crystal Lake; Mrs. Agatha Duyne, of Marengo; and William H. Blank, Harvard, a retired employee of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway System, and a veteran of World War I.

ODD'n'ENDS

We have probed the earth, excavated it, burned it, ripped things from it, buried things in it, chopped down its forests, leveled its hills, muddied its waters, and dirtied its air. That does not fit my definition of a good tenant. If we were here on a month-to-month basis, we would have been evicted long ago!

Graham Rockley

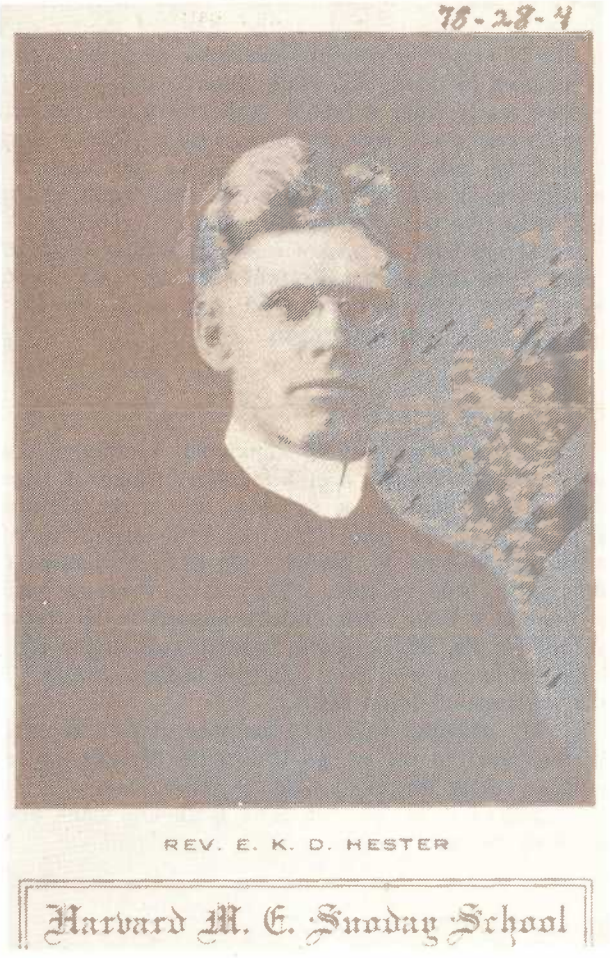
In the span of something like three quarters of a century, this country has gone from the little red schoolhouse to the big consolidated schoolhouse in the red.

Just for record: Have you ever read the Congressional Record? It is almost like a religious experience. It passeth all understanding.

Even perfect people need to use pencils with erasers.

CONTRIBUTORS

We would like to thank our ever faith contributors Leta and Alice Clark, for their help on membership docent and visitor information; Clara Vogel, who wrote the charming story about Greenwood; and Mr. Mark Haggitt, whose letter to the members we hope will be continued feature of the Tracer.



This gentleman was the pastor of the Harvard Methodist church. We know his name, E.K.D. Hester. We know he came to Harvard in 1904 and left in 1908. Is there anything else? Did he have a fmily? Where did he come from? Where did he go? Can anyone tell us?

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We do not even have an identity for these young people. Is it a marriage picture? It is unmarked but it seems to be of the era when Anthony Ruffie was the photographer in Harvard, Did he take it? Can anyone supply any clues?

Is this your house? Or do your recognize it? Please write the Tracer or any editor of the Tracer.

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